

Sallie Dietrich  
5217 Sumner St  
Lincoln, NE, 68506

Dear Hannah Green:

I know your real name isn't Hannah Green, that you wrote *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* under a pen name because the story was autobiographical. I only recently learned this, even though I read the book time and again several years ago. Now I understand what was different about your writing, and why I kept coming back to the story. I realize now exactly how much of myself I saw in your main character, and therefore I suppose in yourself a little.

In your book, Deborah is a young girl caught in her own world of schizophrenia. This world is every bit as real to her as Earth, and in many ways more beautiful and safer for her. In Yr, the world she imagines, Deborah can be a bird or a horse; she can fly; she is befriended by infinitely beautiful and wise gods. In Yr, she does not need to fit in with the rest of the world. In Yr, all that matters are Deborah and the gods.

One thing that has always captivated me about your writing is how real and how beautiful the imagery in it is. If Yr is anything like the world of your imaginings, Hannah, I am impressed with the strength it must have taken you to overcome schizophrenia and find a place for yourself in the real world. It must have been so tempting to just slip into the easier, more peaceful, undemanding imaginary world.

This, I suppose, is where Furi, or Doctor Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, comes in. Furi is Deborah's name for her doctor, who is presumably very much like Frieda was to you. She was a genius doctor, as you make sure your book points out. It is impossible to read this book and not see the respect you had for her, and the kindness with which she treated you. Are you still in touch? It is always a little sad at the end of the novel, when Furi seems to disappear from Deborah's life as Deborah learns to cope without her. While this is for the best, it makes me wonder what happened in real life. It would be a shame to let a bond like that die, and I very much hope you did not.

You went through more than I can possibly imagine when you were my age, Hannah. Even so, in many ways your book mirrors the way I felt through much of my time in middle school. I was something of a misfit, spending my time with books and music rather than with soccer and television. My parents never had the money or the fashion sense to buy me clothes like those of my peers, and I've always been far too tall to fit in with girls at ballet or cheer classes. And so the phrase *You are not of them*, which the gods tell Deborah time and again, offered me the same small comfort it offered her. I was nothing like my peers, and therefore had no need to try to fit in with them.

As time passed, however, I found more friends similar to myself. I learned to find my niche in a larger school, and connect with people through shared interests. Though somewhere imaginary and safe held no little attraction for me at times, I took the lesson from your book, and followed in your courageous footsteps.

I am no longer a misfit. I am leaving for an Ivy League school next year, I am friendly and athletic, and I could not be happier as a teenager. Even so--when I leave for college, there is no doubt this book will be among those I take with me. Thank you, Hannah Green, for telling me about your life through this story, and for giving me the courage to take my own life in my charge.

Again, thank you.

Sallie Dietrich

